

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) Sugar-free hard-coated comestibles consisting of a hard coating and an edible, chewable and/or pharmaceutical core that is elected from the group consisting of pharmaceutical tablets, chewing gum, confectionery product, chocolate and nut, and said hard coating is obtainable by using a coating syrup comprising at least 95% maltitol and characterised in that

- a) dry matter content of syrup is from 68-72%, and
- b) dry matter content of syrup is comprising from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

2. (Currently amended) Sugar-free hard-coated comestibles according to claim 1, characterised in that said maltitol syrup consists of:

- a) from 95-97% by weight of maltitol,
- b) a maximum of 1.5% by weight of DP₁,
- c) from 0-1.5% by weight of DP₃,
- d) from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

3. (canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (*Currently amended*) Process for preparing sugar-free hard-coated comestibles and said process comprising the following steps:

a) applying a coating syrup, containing a maltitol syrup, onto the cores of the comestibles in a moving bed of a coating apparatus,

b) applying maltitol in powder form for obtaining coated cores,

c) drying the coated cores by using drying air in the temperature range of from 15 to 45°C and a moisture content of at most 50% relative humidity, and said process is characterised in that maltitol syrups of step a) has a dry matter content from 68-72% and said maltitol syrup ~~is~~ comprises 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

6. (*Currently amended*) Process according to claim 5 characterised in that in step a) dry matter of maltitol syrup is consisting of:

a) from 95-97% by weight of maltitol,

b) a maximum of 1.5% by weight of DP₁,

c) from 0-1.5% by weight of DP₃,

d) from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

7. (canceled)

8. (canceled)

9. (New) Sugar-free comestibles according to claim **1**, characterized in that the dry matter content of said syrup is from 70-72%.

10. (New) Sugar-free comestibles according to claim **1**, characterized in that said comestibles have a smooth, regular surface.

11. (New) Sugar-free comestibles according to any one of claims 1, 2, 9 or 10, characterised in that the core is chewing gum and the hard coating is non-sticky and the surface of the hard coating is regularly formed and remains intact during processing.